AI Overview

Apple Blight (Fire Blight)

Apple blight, also known as fire blight, is a bacterial disease that affects apple trees and other fruit trees. It can cause significant damage to trees, resulting in reduced fruit production and even tree death.

Symptoms:

- Black or brown discoloration of leaves, flowers, and twigs
- Wilting and drooping of branches
- Oozing of a sticky, milky substance from infected areas
- Cankers (lesions) on the bark that may appear sunken or cracked
- "Shepherd's crook" shaped branches, where infected branches bend downward

Causes:

Fire blight is caused by the bacterium Erwinia amylovora. It spreads through rain, insects, and pruning tools. Trees are particularly susceptible during bloom and when there are high levels of humidity.

Treatment:

- **Prune infected branches:** Cut infected branches at least 6 inches below the visible symptoms. Disinfect pruning tools between cuts.
- **Remove diseased fruit:** Collect and destroy any infected fruits to prevent the spread of the disease.
- **Apply antibiotics:** In severe cases, antibiotic sprays may be applied to control the infection.
- **Protect young trees:** Use tree guards or netting to protect young trees from insects that can spread the bacteria.
- **Select resistant varieties:** Choose apple varieties that are less susceptible to fire blight.

Prevention:

- Avoid over-watering and excessive fertilization.
- Prune trees in the fall or winter, when the disease is less active.
- Monitor trees regularly for signs of infection.
- Use clean and disinfected pruning tools.
- Remove and destroy any diseased trees or debris.

Note: Fire blight can also affect other fruit trees, such as pears, quinces, and crabapples. If you suspect your tree has fire blight, it is important to take action immediately to prevent the spread of the disease.